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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 006251

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [CY](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA AGREEMENT EXTENSION PROTOCOL FACES FIGHT IN  
TURKEY'S PARLIAMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 6229

[1](#)B. 2003 ANKARA 6303

(U) Classified by Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, E.O.  
12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Although EU Enlargement Commissioner Rehn recently urged Turkey to ratify the Ankara Agreement extension protocol as soon as possible (ref A), the GOT still has made no decision on when to send the protocol to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). The GOT, initially intent on sending Turkey's declaration of non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) for ratification with the protocol, now appears to be re-thinking that strategy. Regardless, the protocol faces a tough TGNA fight. No one is yet predicting defeat, but the battle lines are still not fully drawn, and at least some of PM Erdogan's ruling AK party MPs will defect and vote against it. Erdogan can minimize defections by insisting on an open TGNA vote. End Summary.

GOT Undecided About When to Submit Protocol

[1](#)2. (C) Despite Rehn's strong urgings to PM Erdogan and FM Gul, the GOT has not yet decided when to submit the Ankara Agreement extension protocol (extending the Customs Union to all 25 members, including the ROC) to the TGNA for ratification. FM Gul told reporters on October 11 that ratification of the protocol is not "an urgent issue." Asked about ratification October 13, Chief EU negotiator Babacan told reporters, "necessary steps will be taken when the time comes." Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Vice Chair for Foreign Relations Onur Oymen tells us his party favors delaying ratification because the Turkish public is currently angry over EU Cyprus-related demands on Turkey; Oymen says delay will calm the debate.

[1](#)3. (C) MFA Northeastern Mediterranean DDG Bilman told visiting EUR/SE Director on October 12 that Gul's statement reflects the difficult position the GOT is in on the protocol. Asked whether the GOT will await European Parliament (EP) approval before submitting it to the TGNA, Bilman said the "idea has surfaced." He added that the GOT faces a "chicken and egg" problem, since the EP is awaiting word from Turkey on whether Turkey's declaration of non-recognition of Cyprus will be submitted for ratification together with the protocol.

Will Turkey's Non-Recognition Declaration Be Submitted?

[1](#)4. (C) When we had spoken to him on October 7, Bilman had assumed without question that the non-recognition declaration would be submitted with the protocol for TGNA ratification, adding that otherwise the protocol would not pass. MFA DDG for economic relations with the EU Yenel told EUR/SE Director the same thing October 11, though he acknowledged the EU did not want the non-recognition declaration attached. However, the GOT may be changing its approach. Asked the same question in his October 12 meeting with EUR/SE Director, Bilman (the MFA's Cyprus authority) said the GOT is now examining "all options."

[1](#)5. (C) Bilman speculated the TGNA could add its own declaration. CHP Foreign Affairs Vice Chair Oymen told us he proposes that the TGNA add its own reservation specifying that the protocol would not be implemented as to Cyprus until there is an overall settlement.

Worries About Defections Among Ruling Party MPs

[1](#)6. (U) Ratification of the protocol requires a majority of MPs present during the vote. Of 550 MPs, Erdogan and Gul's ruling AK party has 355; main opposition CHP 155; Motherland Party (ANAP) 21; other parties and independents 15; four seats are vacant.

[1](#)7. (C) Bilman, a frequent participant in high-level Cyprus meetings, has told us privately for weeks that PM Erdogan and FM Gul are deeply worried about defections among their own AKP MPs when the protocol comes up for ratification. Bilman reiterated those concerns October 12.

18. (C) According to Bilman, Gul returned from an October 2 meeting with all AKP MPs "a changed man," wondering whether he could push the protocol through without "breaking the party." According to Bilman, Gul received a "warning" from AKP MPs that further Turkish concessions on Cyprus without any move from the Greek Cypriots risks a split in AKP. Publicly, in an October 7 television interview, Gul predicted the extension protocol would pass -- but refused to give a "guarantee."

No One Predicting Defeat -- Yet  
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19. (C) MPs from AKP's different factions, as well as MPs from other parties, academics and journalists have given us mixed predictions about how tough a fight the protocol will face in the TGNA. None of our interlocutors, even those opposed to the protocol, has yet predicted the protocol will be defeated, but the real battle lines will be drawn only after the MFA submits the protocol to the TGNA. All expect tough debate, spurred by main opposition CHP. An extra-parliamentary so-called Cyprus "National Experts Group," which includes former PM Ecevit and Rauf Denktash, has already turned up the heat with an October 9 letter to all MPs urging a "no" vote on the protocol.

110. (C) Everyone expects defections among AKP MPs, particularly nationalist MPs, but estimates vary. Some MPs and other contacts predict easy ratification, with fewer than a dozen defections; others anticipate significant defections; some go so far as to predict the vote could provoke an AK party split. Submitting the protocol for ratification without also submitting Turkey's declaration on non-recognition of Cyprus, contacts stress, will increase the number of defections.

111. (C) A small group of dissident CHP MPs -- five to 10 -- will probably defy party leader Baykal and vote yes. The newly-formed ANAP parliamentary group (septel) has not announced its position; we expect at least some of its 21 MPs will vote in favor.

112. (C) Some AK MPs and others with whom we spoke understand that rejection of the protocol would deal a near-fatal blow to Turkey's EU aspirations. The AKP Vice Chair of the TGNA Foreign Affairs Committee told us that despite his misgivings about the protocol, he is loathe to vote against it and end Turkey's EU aspirations. CHP Foreign Affairs Vice Chair Oymen is a notable exception; he thinks Turkey's EU candidacy can survive TGNA rejection of the protocol -- unless, in his words, the EU is seeking an "excuse" to exclude Turkey.

Watch How the TGNA Vote is Taken  
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113. (U) The manner in which the TGNA vote is conducted will influence the number of AKP defections. TGNA ratification votes are normally open; however, if more than half the MPs present agree, the vote can be secret. The March 2003 vote that defeated a motion to allow U.S. troops to transit Turkey en route to Iraq was a secret vote, allowing MPs to defy AKP's stated support for the measure with impunity.

114. (C) AKP leaders must also have to decide whether or not to make a parliamentary "group decision" to impose party discipline and require AK MPs to vote yes. AKP did not take a group decision in the March 2003 vote. AKP is still undecided on a group decision on the protocol vote.

115. (C) Erdogan, who avoids group decisions because of his professed support for internal party democracy, could accomplish the same objective by making his wishes known and having an open vote. Defiant AKP MPs would face Erdogan's wrath. Erdogan employed this tactic in the October 2003 TGNA vote over sending Turkish troops to Iraq (reftel), which resulted in overwhelming approval.

116. (C) Comment: Debate on the extension protocol is not yet fully joined, and intervening events in the EU and on Cyprus could affect the outcome. In any event, PM Erdogan will have to expend significant domestic political capital to gain TGNA approval. Given how crucial the EU accession process is to Erdogan's government, and how crucial the protocol is to the EU, he will do so. However, his price will be upping the ante with the EU on future Cyprus-related issues. End Comment.

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